

Government Administration and Elections Committee
Testimony of R. Bartley Halloran, Esq.
on
Raised Bill 5021 and Raised Bill 5022
February 22, 2010

Members of the Government and Administration and Elections Committee:

My name is R. Bartley Halloran. I am an attorney in Farmington, Connecticut, and I represent the Association of Connecticut Lobbyists (ACL).

I am offering testimony today on behalf of the ACL concerning the Raised Bills 5021 and 5022. While these bills attempt to remedy constitutional flaws in the public financing laws, unfortunately they do nothing to restore the basic rights of thousands of Connecticut Citizens. Under the act, lobbyists, their spouses and children cannot serve as officers of local town parties, cannot attend local political events, cannot participate in the public finance system and are restricted from active participation in campaigns.

The recent United States Supreme Court decision on corporate involvement in the political process is a harbinger of what will occur in the Second Circuit concerning the ACL's appeal of these restrictions. The court, in its decision, deemed that participation in the political process is a core constitutional right. The justification used to restrict corporations, a suggestion that bans are supportable to restore public confidence in the system, was found insufficient in that case. This is the same justification used to support the criminalization of lobbyist's political activities. In striking down this ban, the United States Supreme Court specifically noted that political speech is political speech, it cannot be limited by the identity of the speaker.

It might be a politically unpopular position to defend the rights of lobbyist to participate in the process. However, it is clearly the right thing to do. We strongly urge you to strike down the ban on lobbyists and their families to make contributions, and engage in solicitation and participation in the political process.